

BUILDING PERMITTING & INSPECTION

FAUQUIER COUNTY NEWSLETTER

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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3rd Edition

August 2007

2006 Code Change Cycle

Many contractors and designers have been listening to the rumors floating around concerning the adoption of the new code. Questions are being asked such as: When is the State going to adopt a new code? Which year of the code are they going to adopt? When will the new code take effect? There has even been a rumor that the State of Virginia was going to adopt the 2009 code and bypass the 2006 code all together.



The process involved in changing from the 2003 Codes, currently in use, to any subsequent edition of the Code is a long process with many steps. The process as outlined on this page is what the State has already gone through for the 2006 Code Change Cycle and what is yet to come.

1st - A Notice of Intended Regulatory Action (NOIRA) was the first step in the regulatory update process. After publication in the Virginia Register, a 30 day period was established for the submittal of comments concerning the Board of Housing and Community Development's intent to update the building and fire codes. Approval for publishing the NOIRA had to be obtained through the Executive Branch of the state government (The Department of Planning and Budget, the Secretary of Commerce and Trade and the Governor's Office). The NOIRA for the 2006 Code Change Cycle was published in the February 5, 2007 Virginia Register and may be viewed at <http://legis.state.va.us/codecomm/register/REGINDEX.HTM>.

2nd - The next step in the code change process is the formulation and publishing of the proposed regulations. The Board of Housing and Community Development approved the proposed regulations at its March 26, 2007 meeting. Those proposed regulations were approved through the Executive Branch agencies and were published in the Virginia Register on June 11, 2007.

Code Change (Continue on page 4)

Checking Your Deck for Safety

Gas prices are on the rise again and families are spending more time at home and enjoying their time in the yard and on their decks. We always clean the winter grime and spring dust off our decks but when is the last time you walked around your deck to check how it is standing up, '*literally*.' Decks can develop trouble spots over the winter and may need some attention. This may be a great time for a "deck-check."

Reasons for a deck collapse are varied and may include the age of the deck, poor maintenance, exceeding load capacity or improper building methods. The good news is that deck failures can be avoided.

A simple annual deck inspection doesn't take long or require special tools, but it's a great investment. All it takes is time and it can help prevent unnecessary accidents and keep your deck a safe place for your family. It's a matter of knowing your deck's limitations, making yourself aware of any problems and then making the needed repairs. You can do an annual deck inspection or may choose to have a professional inspect your deck.

- *Split or Decaying Wood*: Check areas of the deck to be sure the wood is still sound. You are looking for areas that tend to stay damp and may be soft. Use an ice pick or screwdriver to penetrate the wood surface. If you can easily penetrate 1/4" to 1/2" and it breaks off without splinters or is soft and spongy, decay may be present. Also look for small insect holes that can destroy the wood. This includes the ledger board, where the deck attaches to the house, support posts, joist and railings.

Flashing: Flashing is a metal or plastic guard that directs water out and away from sensitive areas. It's installed where the deck and house come together between the house and the deck's ledger board. Be certain the flashing is sound and firmly in place. Keeping debris from collecting in this area will help move the moisture away from the ledger board.

Loose or Corroded Fasteners: Fasteners include nails, screws or anchors in the ledger board, hangers supporting the floor joist or attaching the decking boards. If a fastener appears rusted or corroded consider replacing it. A corroded fastener can cause deterioration in the

Deck Safety (Continued on page 4)

10 TIPS

for making sure your contractor measures up.

- 1.** Hire only licensed contractors.
- 2.** Check contractor's license at www.dpor.virginia.gov or (804) 367-8511.
- 3.** Get three references, review past work.
- 4.** Get at least three bids.
- 5.** Get a written contract and don't sign anything until you completely understand the terms.
- 6.** Pay 10% down, or \$1,000, whichever is less.
- 7.** Don't let payments get ahead of work. Keep record of payments.
- 8.** Don't make final payment until you're satisfied with the job.
- 9.** Don't pay cash.
- 10.** Keep a job file of all papers relating to your project.

**www.dpor.virginia.gov
(804) 367-8511**

Virginia Board for Contractors

Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation



Safety First: Disaster Preparedness Tips for Your Home and Family Evacuation Plan

Prepare Your House: Before A Flood

- * Stock up on building materials such as plywood, plastic sheeting, hammer, nails, saw, pay bar, shovels, and sandbags. In the case of an emergency, you will be better off already having these items on hand.
- * Prevent electrical damage by raising the level of electrical components (fuse and circuit breaker boxes, meters, switches, and outlets). This can save you from the expense of replacing a flood-damaged system, and it will help prevent fires caused by short circuits. Remember that a licensed contractor should do this work.

Prepare Your House: Before An Earthquake

- * Brace overhead light fixtures.
- * Repair any defective electrical or gas connections.
- * Secure your water heater by strapping it to wall studs or bolting it to the floor (this can prevent a possible gas leak and provide a convenient source of clean water after an earthquake).
- * Repair cracks in foundations or ceilings.
- * Bolt your house to its foundation.

Prepare Your House: Before a Wildfire

- * Install smoke detectors on every level of your house, in every bedroom, and in hallways leading to bedrooms.
- * Use fire-resistant materials when building or renovating. Most importantly, use tile or flame-retardant shingles on your roof.
- * Keep vegetation, yard debris, and any other combustible materials at least 30 feet away from your house.
- * Plant trees away from your house at a distance greater than their mature height. If you do have trees close to your home, trim them to a height of 8 to 10 feet and keep them free of dead or dying wood.
- * Use stone walls, swimming pools, or patios to create a shield safety zone between vegetation and your house.
- * Avoid planting shrubs near your house. Instead, try alternatives like a fountain or rock garden.
- * Clear rain gutters of dead limbs, needles, and other debris.

Prepare Your Family: Evacuation Plan

- * In the event of an emergency such as a flood, wildfire, tornado, or hurricane, you may be instructed to evacuate your house. Depending on the type of natural disaster, you may have to travel 20 to 50 miles to get your family to safety. Establish a "safety destination" (like a friend or relative's house some distance away) and plan several different routes to get there so you can drive around roadblocks or hazards.
- * Practice your plan and become familiar with each route so you will be better prepared.
- * You may need to turn off your gas, water, and electricity before you evacuate. Each member of the house should learn when and how to do this.

Prepare Your Family: Communication Plan

- * During an emergency it is usually easier to make long distance calls, so choose an out-of-state relative to be your family communication center." Be sure that each member of your family knows the name and phone number for this person in case you are separated. By having everyone call one central person, it will be easier for you to check on each other and reunite after a disaster.

RECENT CODE ISSUES

MASONRY FIREPLACES:

The County has been doing inspections on fireplaces and flues for approximately 4 months now and we have encountered a number of problem areas. The code outlines everything needed for the construction of masonry fireplaces and flues from the ground all the way through the roof but there are several areas that need particular scrutiny. Please see section R1003 of the IRC 2003 edition.

The following are just a few troublesome areas:

The footing for the fireplace is the 1st area that has a different requirement than the average footing. The fireplace or flue footing is required to be 12 inches thick, compared to the average 8". The footing must also extend 6 inches beyond all sides of the chimney.

The next area where we have seen some confusion is the requirement for the building of the fire box. Firebrick, that normally line the firebox, is required to be laid using a different type of mortar than the mortar used for the rest of the masonry construction. You are required to utilize medium duty refractory mortar to lay firebrick and the width of the mortar joints shall not be greater than 1/4 inch.

Another area that is often overlooked in the planning stage of construction is the hearth extension. The size of the extension is dictated by the size of the fire box opening. Please see the IRC for specific requirements. The materials used to build the hearth extension are required to be masonry and all combustible materials are required to be removed from the underside of the hearth extension. The final requirement is that the hearth extensions are required to carry their own weight and all imposed loads.

Fireplace clearance to combustibles is another confusing area of the code. There are restrictions on combustibles applied to the face of the fireplace and chimney as well as to the sides. Most often an air space is required for framing members in proximity to the body of the fireplace and flue.

Our best advice to contractors and homeowners is to get a copy of the code requirements for this installation before you start construction and ask a lot of questions. This is an area of construction that is costly to change.

From The Hot Seat

David J. Cooper - Building Official

THIRD PARTY INSPECTIONS

The new 3rd party inspection policy is here and will become effective on September 15, 2007. The State of Virginia required the Building Official of every jurisdiction to formulate an inspection policy for independent inspection companies. We have now completed the policy for Fauquier County.

In the policy you will find all of the requirements for the different facets of 3rd party inspections. You will find when 3rd party inspections may be performed, who may perform these inspections and how to perform the inspections. Last but not least we have outlined what will happen if you do not follow the inspection policy.

The new policy will require change by both contractors and 3rd party agencies but many of the changes will take place over time and not all at once. The immediate effects will be that you will have to re-apply for approval to do 3rd party inspections, you will have to attend a seminar on 3rd party inspections given by the Building Office, and you will have to call your inspections into the Building Official for approval 24 hours prior to when the inspection occurs.

Changes that will take effect later include training requirements for inspectors, record keeping, and some changes to the certifications that will be required to qualify individuals to perform 3rd party field inspections.

The changes that are being made in Fauquier County are probably very similar to other jurisdiction's 3rd party policies that have taken effect all across the State. The County has modeled its policy directly along the guidelines of other Counties in Region IV of the VBCOA.

The plus side to the new policy is that the inspections allowed to be performed by 3rd party agencies have been expanded to include all trades. The majority of the inspections performed by 3rd party agencies in the past have been for concrete. Now all inspections may be performed by properly certified 3rd party personnel. The County will still reserve the right to perform the final inspection.

Please contact this office for all of the details. As always if you have any comments about anything in this newsletter please don't hesitate to contact me.

3rd - The next step in the process is a 60-day public comment period, during the comment period proposals to change the proposed regulations may be submitted. The Department already has a number of code change proposals which have been submitted by various work groups and committees and by individuals or organizations. The last day for the acceptance of code change proposals is August 11, 2007. Any proposals received after the deadline will be held over for the code change process for the adoption of the 2009 Codes.

4th - During the 60-day comment period, the Board of Housing and Community Development conducted a public hearing to permit oral comment to accompany the submittal for code change proposals on July 24, 2007. The hearing was held at the Greater Richmond Convention Center, 404 North 3rd Street, Lecture Room B-10, Richmond, Virginia.

5th - After the 60-day comment period ends, staff of the DHCD will then compile all the public comment and code change proposals. A staff evaluation will be done for each proposal and then a compilation document will be developed. This compilation document will contain all the code change proposals, testimony of the public hearing and the staff evaluations.

6th - Once the compilation document is available, a second comment period will be established. We anticipate the second comment period to be a 30-day comment period from mid-September to mid-October of 2007. This comment period provides the opportunity for all interested parties to review all proposals submitted and to review the staff evaluations for all proposals. The Board will accept comments during this period on any proposals and on the staff evaluations. If you or your group wish to argue for or against a proposal, you may submit comments requesting the Board to reject or approve the proposal providing any necessary substantiation.

7th - At the end of the second comment period, all comments will be compiled and the Board will consider each proposal. The anticipated time frame for the Board's action on all proposals is early November 2007 with the anticipated final action by the Board on December 10, 2007. Once the Board's decisions are made, staff will prepare the final regulations for submittal through the Executive Branch agencies and for final publication in the Virginia Register. The final regulations are slated to become effective in March of 2008.

Once all of this process is completed the State will look toward the next code change. The same process will start over for the 2009 Codes with the hopes of adopting it within 18 months or 2 years.



surrounding wood. Tighten any loose fasteners and pound in any nails that have popped up.

Railings and Banisters: These should be secure, so push on them to make sure there is no give. Check the height of the railing. Today's codes would require the guard railing to be a minimum of 36" high and have a maximum of 4" spacing between the pickets to keep small children from squeezing through. You are not required to make any change to existing railings but this is something to consider updating.

Stairs: check any railings or handrails to be sure they are firmly held in place; check also the risers and stringers to be certain they are securely attached and not decayed.

Cleaning and Maintenance: Clean away any leaves and debris, since these can be slippery and promote mildew. If mildew is present or the deck coating has worn away, make time to clean and apply a new water-proofing coating.

For many other recommendations concerning your deck maintenance try contacting NADRA at :

www.nadra.org
888.nadra.4u
888-623-7248

CONTACT NUMBERS

Building Inspections 540-347-8646
Fax 540-347-2043
Zoning Division 540-347-8789
Soil Scientist 540-341-3374
Fire Marshal 540-347-6995
Highway Department 540-347-6441
Health Department 540-347-6363
Dig Smart 1-888-258-0808
Miss Utility 1-800-552-7001
Permitting & Inspection questions e-mail:

Jennifer.Sexton@fauquiercounty.gov
REFERENCES TO OTHER SITES:

www.fauquiercounty.gov

www.vbcoa.org

www.dhcd.virginia.gov

www.iccsafe.org

www.energycodes.gov/rescheck

www.vpmia.org

www.osha.org

Office Hours 8:00 – 4:30 Monday-Friday